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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KUALA LUMPUR 001534

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MLS AARON COPE AND IO/UNP PAUL WICKBERG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/17/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [UNSC](#) [BM](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: GAMBARI'S VISIT TO MALAYSIA

REF: A. STATE 144434

[1](#)B. KUALA LUMPUR 1513

[1](#)C. STATE 137644

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. David B. Shear  
for reasons 1.4 (b and d).

SUMMARY

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[1](#)1. (SBU) UN Special Envoy to Burma Ibrahim Gambari held talks in Kuala Lumpur with Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar and Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi on October 16 - 17. FM Hamid announced Malaysia and ASEAN would never suspend Burma or agree to sanctions against the military regime. Hamid commented that ASEAN's best option was to support UN efforts of engagement through Gambari. Hamid supported Gambari's speedy return to Burma and reportedly called the Burmese foreign minister on October 17 to encourage the junta to receive Gambari before the envoy returned to New York. Visiting EAP DAS Christensen delivered ref A demarche during an October 17 meeting with MFA Secretary General Rastam Mohd Isa. Rastam reiterated Malaysia's assertion that Burma is not an issue of international security and therefore not suitable for UN Security Council referral. Malaysia supports "dialogue without conditions" between the Burmese parties and a gradual transfer of power from the military to democratically elected civilians. Malaysia would not support ideas floating around the media calling for "six-party talks" on Burma but will seek to fully support Gambari's engagement and speedy return to Burma. End Summary.

UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari's Visit to Malaysia  
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[1](#)2. (U) UN Special Envoy to Burma Ibrahim Gambari held talks in Kuala Lumpur October 16 - 17, meeting with Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar October 16 and Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi the following day. Gambari told the press on October 16 that he brought a message from the UN Secretary General to PM Abdullah concerning "the support that the United Nations needs from ASEAN and neighboring countries to address the crisis in Burma at the moment, but more importantly, the longer term issues of peace, stability, democratization, and human rights in the country."

Malaysia rules out sanctions or suspension from ASEAN  
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[1](#)3. (U) At a press conference following his October 16 meeting

with Gambari, FM Syed Hamid Albar stated that the UN wanted Malaysia and other ASEAN member countries to urge Burma to hasten negotiations and find an amicable solution to its internal crisis. However, Hamid played down suggestions that the request was akin to asking Malaysia and ASEAN member countries to generate pressure on the junta to end the current crisis. Hamid stated categorically that ASEAN will never suspend Burma from the 10-nation bloc or impose sanctions. He explained, "If you want Myanmar to continue to be engaged, first we should not be talking about suspending. Nobody can talk when you are threatening with all sorts of things." Hamid also pointed out that there was "no mechanism for suspension in ASEAN" and that "ASEAN will never take that route." Hamid commented that the best option would be to encourage Burma and its leadership to continue engaging with the UN through Gambari.

14. (U) Hamid told reporters that Gambari was doing an excellent job, and that the UN envoy should continue "with the good work he has done and Malaysia and ASEAN fully support all his efforts and for him to continue engaging with the Myanmar leadership to resolve the crisis." He added that Gambari needs to move further to kick-start the reconciliation process in Burma and to ensure the UN's role in bringing together all the affected parties for discussion is effective. "What is important is ASEAN backs the UN's efforts. We can request Myanmar to work closely with the UN. It is the best way and best channel for Myanmar to gain the support of the international community," Hamid said. In this context, the Foreign Minister hoped "Myanmar will allow Gambari to go back soon and be allowed to stay much longer to enable him to discuss with the various parties."

Malaysia upbeat about developments in Burma

KUALA LUMP 00001534 002 OF 003

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15. (U) Hamid declared to the press on October 16 that he was "upbeat" about developments in Burma since Gambari's visit in early October. He noted that the situation in Burma remained calm, and it was encouraging that the Burmese government had appointed a liaison officer to maintain "relations" with detained democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The foreign minister also pointed out that world powers should also not demand "overnight political change in Myanmar." "You can't just simply put what is Western democracy into Myanmar without taking into account their (the junta's) own position. We don't believe that overnight you can change everything. It can create more problems. We have seen the examples in Afghanistan . . . in Iraq," Hamid said.

Gambari meets with PM Abdullah -- calls for real action  
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16. (SBU) Gambari met with PM Abdullah on October 17 to deliver his message from the Secretary General. Following the meeting, Gambari reportedly told the Malaysian press that he wants Southeast Asian countries to turn their rhetoric on Burma into real action to achieve reform. He wanted to see "what ASEAN governments are really prepared to do to resolve the crisis in Burma. It is not enough for ASEAN countries to make statements expressing concern. They must now work together with the UN, China, and India." Gambari is also reported to have remarked that ASEAN members should be persistent and make sure that the discussions between the Burmese government and the opposition parties actually take place. He pointed out that "in the past this was all left to the Myanmar government. This must now change."

DAS Christensen meets with MFA on Burma  
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17. (SBU) Visiting EAP DAS Thomas Christensen delivered ref A demarche during an October 17 meeting with Secretary General Rastam Mohd Isa. He also reiterated USG hopes that ASEAN

would support an ASEAN envoy to Burma as an additional method of sustaining and supporting Gambari's mission. Rastam advised that FM Hamid had called the Burmese FM on the morning of October 17 to urge the Junta to allow Gambari to return to Burma during his current trip to the region and not to wait until he had returned to New York. On the subject of a possible ASEAN envoy to support Gambari, Rastam reiterated Hamid's previous position that Malaysia and ASEAN thought it more important to support Gambari's mission and avoid distractions. Rastam related Syed Hamid's failed visit to Burma in March 2006 and admitted that Malaysia was still stinging from the junta's rejection of their diplomatic overtures at that time. But, Rastam said, "let him (Gambari) do his consultations then we can talk further."

18. (SBU) Rastam indicated that the Thai had proposed to conduct "six-party talks" but Malaysia did not support this idea. According to Rastam, Gambari was making appreciable progress in dealing with the Burmese junta, and while his proposals were not all accepted, the junta had not rejected them either. Malaysia would continue to support Gambari's UN mission and would take whatever steps it could to help Gambari promote trust with the Burmese generals.

19. (SBU) Rastam noted that Malaysia's primary goal in dealing with Burma was dialogue among the parties without conditions. "It is more useful for Aung San Suu Kyi to be out of house arrest, rather than in her current position," Rastam continued, alluding to calls for Junta conditions to be met prior to her release. "We need a system for her to be released, and then broad based consultations can occur." Rastam reiterated that the world should not simply expect an immediate, 100 percent hand over of the government to civilians. "We must find ways to bring the military and civilian sides together" for a gradual transfer of power to a civilian democracy, he said, adding that the generals are not willing to just give in to international pressure. Rastam noted that Malaysia and China share the same position regarding a referral of Burma to the UN Security Council, namely, "this is not an issue of international security -- this is an internal issue for Burma."

Prime Minister's Political Secretary  
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KUALA LUMP 00001534 003 OF 003

110. (C) DAS Christensen also delivered ref. a demarche to Prime Ministerial Political Secretary Vincent Lim, who appeared well informed on the subject of Burma but who avoided specific comment on an early Gambari stop in Burma. We have no doubt, however, that our thoughts on Burma will be conveyed to the Prime Minister.

Comment  
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111. (C) We note with interest Hamid's October 17 effort to urge the Burmese to welcome Gambari sooner than November, but it does not appear that Gambari is ready to try for a visit to Burma as early as this week. Rastam told us he would depart Kuala Lumpur for Jakarta tonight, and the local news is reporting that he will visit Japan, India, and China after that. Malaysia has not yet bought our suggestion that ASEAN appoint an envoy to support Gambari's mission, although he avoided rejecting the idea. Rastam told us that the subject didn't arise in GOM talks with the UN envoy. If Gambari were to explicitly request support for an ASEAN envoy this should help in convincing Malaysia to accept and advocate the idea within ASEAN.  
SHEAR